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Documents and
Facts
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Boyd, Jno Parker



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Boyd, T. Parker

DOCUMENTS

AND

FACTS,

RELATIVE TO

MILITARY EVENTS,

DURING THE LATE WAR.

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IN the reduction of the army at the conclusion of the war, and in adapting our military establishment to the circumstances and wants of a time of peace, it was the fortune of Gen. *Boyd* not to find his name among the officers retained. The exclusion of an officer of experience whose only profession was that of arms; whose life, even from his youth, had been spent in camps and in the hazards of war; one, too, who had borne an active part in the late war, and whose name had necessarily become associated with some of the most important events of that period. The exclusion of an officer under such circumstances must, almost unavoidably, in the mind of the public, carry with it an implied censure. Whether this neglect was merited, he must leave to time and the public to determine. But he has friends, to whom he is anxious to vindicate his military character, and who, in truth, will listen to this vindication with pleasure. It is for their use that this Memorial is printed, which has been unavailingly communicated to the government. It contains a more detailed account of the military transactions of the late war, in which he was personally concerned, than has yet been presented to the public; and perhaps they may think that the services he has

rendered his country on these occasions, deserved some other notice than is contained in the subjoined laconic letter from the War Department.

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Copy 2 SIR,

DEPARTMENT OF WAR,
22d May, 1815.

INCLOSED you will receive the *National Intelligencer*, containing a statement of the organization of the military peace establishment of the United States, which you will be pleased to consider as coming authentically from this Department, and act accordingly.

I have the honor to be,
With great respect,
Your obedient servant,

A. J. DALLAS.

BRIGADIER GEN. BOYD,
New York.

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The Hon. WM. H. CRAWFORD, Secretary of War.

IN presenting myself once more to the attention of the National Government, I am aware of assuming both a delicate and unpleasant office. It would have been far more grateful to have owed the exhibition of my claims to the justice and candor of my seniors in command. But their indifference and neglect have deprived me of so eligible a mode, and imposed on me a necessity as painful to myself as it will no doubt be irksome to the Government. A sense of imperious duty left me no alternative; the vindication of my military character was too dear to me to be neglected; and if the trouble I impose cannot be justified by the claims I exhibit, the soldier's love of fame will at least

furnish an excuse for my weakness. This task, so unpleasant at all times, is rendered doubly so by the lateness of the application. But it is humbly conceived the merits of a claim cannot be affected by a delay, the result of other's omissions ; more especially when the delay itself augments the misfortune, and leaves in an act of recompense, but a small part of its advantages.

Under the conviction of the truth of this sentiment, the attention of the Government is respectfully solicited to some of the facts attending the capture of Fort George, to the separate command of that post by the undersigned, together with a few reflections on the battle at Chrystler's Field. This measure has been adopted from a belief that the facts connected with the first of those events have never been disclosed to your department by the General in command, and from an intimation received on one occasion, that such a disclosure would have been followed by the object of this communication : that, perhaps, the President would have thought proper to have conferred on the undersigned a brevet as a compliment to his zeal and efforts on that occasion. It is the design of the undersigned to supply such omissions by documents which can neither be controverted nor suspected. When the merits of that transaction are fully disclosed to the Government, he will be satisfied ; his confidence in their justice precludes a doubt that, if any individual merit was exhibited, it will still be noticed, notwithstanding the lapse of time ; and it is to his country he refers a question so dear to him, to whose judgment, and not to his own, he yields implicit confidence.

In performing the duty he has assumed, he begs leave to state in a concise manner, the principal events of that day, though many of them are already known to the Government. On the evening of the 26th of May, the enclosed order (A. 2.) was promulgated to

the troops. In obedience to its commands, before day-light on the morning of the 27th, the troops were embarked and proceeding to the enemy's shore. The advance, consisting of about five hundred light troops, under the command of Col. Scott, was followed at a short interval by Boyd's brigade, 1300 strong; Winder's and Chandler's brigades successively followed, at intervals of perhaps a mile. It was day-light before they approached the point of landing, at which the enemy were posted on the bank, consisting of two thousand regulars, beside militia and Indians, formed in order of battle, and covered by a one-gun battery. Four armed schooners were ordered to cover our landing, one of which was brought to bear on the battery of the enemy. The advance, under Lieut. Col. Scott, were the first to strike the shore, and instantly attempted the bank, but without success. After the interval of a moment, Boyd's brigade landed, and the bank was carried by the united troops, the whole being under his command, as senior officer on shore. The contest was animated, and destructive for about fifteen minutes, when the enemy broke and fled to the town, before any part of Winder's brigade had arrived. They were pursued five miles by the troops who fought them, and by them *only*, when the pursuit was discontinued by the positive orders of the commanding Major-General.

In this action, the undersigned was principal commander; his brigade and Scott's light troops alone fought and beat the enemy: (A. 3.) the remainder of the army did not reach the shore till the action was decided; the Major-General was still later in arriving. From these facts it appears, that the merits or demerits of the battle on shore, are to be referred to the undersigned as commander in chief. (A. 4.) In estimating these, he begs leave to inquire, in what consists the merit of an action? Is it in gaining a victory? The rout of the enemy was complete. Is it

in gaining it with inferior numbers? The numbers of the enemy were one-fourth greater than ours. (A. 8.) Is it in gaining it with raw troops against veterans? That the American troops were little more than recruits, and untried in the field of battle, is too well known to require proof; of the character of British regulars it is also unnecessary to speak. If more be wanted to give merit to an action, than beating superior numbers of disciplined troops with untried recruits, let it consist in the comparative advantages of position, in the bravery of the contest, and in the comparative loss sustained.

The position of the enemy was on the top of the bank, fronting the Lake, and presenting a front of several hundred yards. Our position was in approaching them in broad day, under a fire that shivered our crowded boats, and covered the Lake around us with foam. It was in the face of such an enemy, that we struck the shore, and formed in order of battle; it was under their fire, supported by their batteries, that we ascended the steep bank of twenty-five feet elevation, up which our cannon were to be dragged, before they could support us. And it was not till all this was accomplished, that the advantages of our position could be compared with those of the enemy.

Was this battle bravely fought by the enemy?— They lined the bank to receive us on our approach; their fire was rapid and incessant till we struck the shore and mounted the bank: in the few moments of interval between the landing of Scott's light troops and my brigade, thrice was that gallant officer forced down the bank. But this opposition did not cease with our landing; for fifteen minutes the two lines in front, at a distance of from six to ten yards, exchanged a destructive and rapid fire, till the determined charge of our troops broke their lines and forced them into the town. We buried 107 of the enemy on the

bank where the first stand was made; 105 prisoners were taken in the engagement; 175 wounded fell into our hands. While it is no less true than astonishing, that our loss scarcely equalled a quarter part of that number.

In comparing this action with others achieved during the war, if it will not suffer by the obstacles surmounted, the dangers incurred, nor the bravery evinced; neither, it is believed, will it in the importance of the consequences. Beside teaching our enemies that the new army of America would contest with them the palm of victory, against superior numbers and great advantages of position; that it would not shrink from a contest, even under circumstances of discouraging inferiority; it conquered a greater extent of territory, and captured a larger amount of property than has been effected by any other single army during the war. Forts George and Erie, twenty-five pieces of cannon, and mortars, colours, large quantities of ammunition, and supplies, were at the same time, the fruits of success and the trophies of victory.

If these brave troops deserve any credit for their exertions, it is humbly suggested, that, hitherto, no such credit has been given to them. Not a brevet was conferred in honor of distinguished individual merit. Neither from the dispatches of Generals Dearborn or Lewis, does it appear that the action was sustained by these troops any more than by the rest of the army. The notorious fact, that the light troops under Scott, and Boyd's brigade, *alone* fought and beat the enemy, has never been promulgated by the Commanders in Chief. The despatches of General Dearborn sanction an inference, that either the action was fought by the light troops only, and supported by Boyd's and Winder's brigades, or else, that these brigades were also engaged, and supported by Chandler. In General Lewis' letter, dated on the field of

battle, a statement is made that Scott's and Forsyth's commands, supported by Boyd's and Winder's brigades, sustained the brunt of the action. The same language is applied to two different brigades, relative to an action so important as that of Fort George, when in fact one of them took no part in an action in which victory was achieved by the other. (A. 5, 6 & 7.)

The credit due to the undersigned, is a subject he refers to with pain and reluctance. But he hopes delicacy may not be violated in expressing a belief that his conduct on that day did not disgrace a life exclusively devoted to military pursuits, and inured to the field of battle ; that he did not shrink from his duty, as a leader of untried recruits, to show an example in his own person of the conduct he wished to inculcate—to unite the duties incumbent on a soldier, with the conduct required from a General—in fine, to be the first in danger, as well as in command. Whatever credit he deserved, was fully awarded to him by the troops who witnessed his efforts ; and the warm, animated, and ardent congratulations of the commander in chief, at the close of that day—the praises he so feelingly lavished upon him—if not grateful from the consciousness of deserving them, were so at least from the implied approbation of his conduct. They at least sanctioned the proud reflection, that in executing a difficult trust, he had discharged his duty to his country.

If it be objected that the consequences, notwithstanding, were less brilliant than might have been expected from our means, permit me to inquire, if more ought to or could have been done by the brigade I had the honor to command, and the light troops under Col. Scott ? The same body of troops that unassisted, beat the superior foe, *alone* pursued him, and if greater effects would have resulted from a continued pursuit, its abandonment cannot be objected to one who only acted in obedience to the positive com-

mands of his superior. In suggesting that the undersigned was not consulted in the plan of the expedition, he is far from reflecting on the commander in chief. He was not authorised to obtrude his advice, nor were his superiors bound to consult him ; he was satisfied with the honor conferred upon him, in being suffered to lead the gallant corps that constituted the advance. Neither does he express any opinion against the mode of the projected attack. But as far as his opinion may be of importance, he respectfully suggests, that it was freely communicated before the battle to Commodore Chauncey, and to Gen. Winder. That opinion was in favor of one feigned and two real simultaneous attacks ; the former opposite Newark for the purpose of distracting the enemy's attention ; of the latter, the first where the invasion occurred, and the other at a point in the rear of the enemy, and cutting off his retreat. If the plan actually executed was a bad one, it cannot be objected to the undersigned, because he was not consulted in adopting it. If the success was less brilliant than was expected, the cause in not being ascribable to him, cannot affect a distinct transaction, conducted by him, and in which the result, it is humbly presumed, was fully adequate to the means confided to him.

On the fifteenth of July, by the illness of Gen. Dearborn, the command of Fort George and its dependencies, devolved on the undersigned, as senior officer present ; but, on the ninth of September, they were again speedily assigned to Gen. Wilkinson. During this period, he is aware that more was expected from him than was accomplished ; and he is also aware, that such an objection, if well founded, would justly have an influence on claims for services previously rendered. He admits, the troops during that period were desirous of active enterprize, and also that none was executed which could possibly be avoided. But to the instructions of the War

Department he looks for a justification of this apparent inactivity, as irksome to his feelings as it was prejudicial to his character. His instructions were positive and precise, that during the period of his command, he should "pay the utmost attention to the instruction and discipline of his troops, and engage in no affair with the enemy that could be avoided." (B. 1.) How far he obeyed his orders, and fulfilled the expectations of his superiors—what difficulties he had to surmount—and the force of the enemy against whose enterprise he had to guard, may be seen from the Documents marked B. 1 to 15. He will barely remark, that no exertions were spared to improve the discipline of his troops, and his success is perhaps not unjustly stated in the declaration of Gen. Miller, that "he saw no part of the army during the war, whose discipline surpassed that of the troops at Fort George during the command of Gen. Boyd." The force of the enemy in front of his lines was at all times equal to the effective disposable force of his command, and considerably superior during the latter period. Affairs between piquets, of greater or less magnitude, were occurring daily, and foraging could only be accomplished within the limits of the enemy, and at the hazard of continual contests; and finally, on the 24th of August, a general attack was made on his lines by the British army of four thousand regulars, beside militia and Indians, under the command of Sir George Prevost, and repulsed with considerable loss on their part, and very trifling on ours. The undersigned claims no merit in this transaction, but Major-General Wilkinson's opinion of the importance of the attack, is freely expressed in his letter of the 23d of August; (B. 12.) and that of the enemy is witnessed not only by the language of the General Order, but by the fact, that the Governor General of all the Canadas hastened with a reinforcement from Kingston, a distance of several hundred miles, to direct it

in person. Upon this subject, he will hazard but one more remark; that his character has perhaps sustained an injury by the publication of the British rumor, relative to that event, contained in a letter from Gen. Wilkinson, while his own official account, previously dispatched to the War Department, was never made public. (B. 13 & 15.)

The importance and responsibility of his command, the difficulties in maintaining the post assigned him, may be inferred from the fact, that a few days before Gen. Dearborn left Fort George, a Council of War was summoned to deliberate on a proposition to abandon the enemy's territory. A prompt decision to maintain that post, evinces the gallantry of the army; but the fact, that such a consultation was rendered *necessary*, establishes the belief of its difficulty in the apprehension of the Commander.

The restrictions laid upon the enterprise of this army were so painful to the undersigned, that he made constant applications for their removal, from the notification of the command devolving upon him, till the arrival of Gen. Wilkinson. But they were not removed till the 30th of July, (which letter was received on the — day of August) and then the permission was limited to the co-operation of the fleet. In the letter notifying the enlarged authority, the difference in the expression, acknowledging those restrictions from those in the letter imposing them, was perhaps calculated to excite a belief that they had been mistaken by the undersigned. Whether or not this operated to his injury he leaves to others to determine. No sooner, however, was this authority enlarged, than the expedition was projected to the head of the Lake, under Gen. Williams, to attack the enemy in the rear, while the troops at the fort made a simultaneous attack in front. The enclosed Documents (B. 9,) show the causes of its abandondent. The appearance of the enemy's fleet, by producing the absence of Com-

modore Chauncey removed the sole condition on which the enterprise was sanctioned by the Government.—The reinforcement of the enemy, and the continued absence of Commodore Chauncey, precluded any new enterprise until the undersigned was succeeded by Gen. Wilkinson.—(Note A.)

The public have also been disappointed in the result of the affair of the 11th November, at Chrystler's Fields. They expected the entire destruction of the enemy's corps, about two thousand strong, by the American army of three times that force. How far their expectation was reasonable, the undersigned will not venture an opinion: he only suggests a few facts, from which an inference may be drawn how far any censure was applicable to himself. It was not the object of the Commander in Chief to capture or even to fight that army if avoidable. This appears from his own avowal in his report to the War Department; from his despatching General Brown, together with the elite of the army, before the battle, from his sending into the field only part of the force contiguous to the battle ground; and from sending away a valuable part of the fleet, with the two principal artillery officers during the battle. His disposition to avoid even a serious engagement appears also strongly from the fact, that although the action lasted three hours, the reinforcement of three hundred men sent by the Commander in Chief to our assistance, only arrived at the close of the action. With this disposition to avoid a battle, the two Major Generals, although confined by indisposition, still continued in command. The conduct of the undersigned is therefore to be estimated by the manner in which their commands were executed by him as senior officer on shore. The strength of the enemy was estimated by no one, at less than two thousand men.—They were supported by seven pieces of heavy artillery and nine gun-boats. The whole force under the

command of the undersigned, who fought on that day, did not exceed one thousand infantry, and three hundred dragoons and artillery. It was with this force, against such an enemy (whose numbers were misapprehended by the commander, as appears by General Lewis' letter annexed, C. 1.) he had to execute the orders of the Commander in Chief. These were on the morning of the eleventh to take up the line of march down the river, and if the "enemy should harass the rear, to turn and beat him back." The troops were preparing to move, when the enemy appeared; they *were* "beaten back," nearly a mile and a half, after a severe action, and did not again molest our advance. The particulars of this battle have been already detailed in my report to the War Department of the 29th of April, 1815. If beating an enemy with two-thirds his force, he having a strong and well chosen position, supported by numerous gun boats and heavy artillery, deserve censure; or if fighting him with an inferior force, when a superior was at hand, be ascribable to him, the undersigned asks no favor from his country. The bravery and good conduct of the troops actually engaged, were seen through an unfavorable medium by a disappointed public; but they have the proud satisfaction of deserving the respect and meeting the applause of their enemies.— Some justice is done to their injured feelings, by the public declaration of Major Glegg, that this action was viewed by the British as one of the most able, fought during the war.

In the above pages, the Government has been presented with a general view of the military transactions during the war, in which the undersigned has been engaged. During that period, he has commanded a principal army in the territory of the enemy, in the vicinity of his superior forces; he has commanded as senior officer in two several engagements, in which the character of the American army was involv-

ed, and its safety hazarded by an obstinate contest with superior forces.—A life passed in military pursuits from the age of sixteen—a long experience of the hazards of war in the field of battle, gave him advantages in a competition with youth and inexperience. With what feelings, then, could he see *promoted* above him Juniors, whom he was in the habit of commanding, new to the field of battle, and strangers to experience? It was not their superior fortune; chance had given him an equal opportunity to meet the enemies of his country; like them he has commanded against superior numbers, and the trophies of victory have also proved the success, as the destruction of lives has the difficulties, of his efforts. Without an opportunity for action, he might have found in misfortune a shield for obscurity: but events have forced him into public notice; circumstances of so active a character; situations of so great responsibility, have not left him, could not leave him indifferent to praise or censure. To have discharged his duty, was to have deserved well of his country; to have failed in it was to incur disgrace. When then—where, has he incurred such disgrace? Was it at Chrystler's fields, when a superior foe was beaten,—because the Commanding General *could not stop* to annihilate him? Was it when he commanded in Canada, because his petitions to be active were refused; because he was only suffered to improve the discipline of his troops, but not to lead them to victory? Was it on the shores of Lake Ontario, when a greater army fled before a less; when veterans cowered to recruits, and strength of position yielded to invincible valor? In the acquisition of territory, and munitions of war, in the capture of forts and artillery, he could not see the marks of public misfortune.

Or was it on the plains of Tippecanoe, he has merited disgrace and neglect? On those plains, where the Commanding General, against his express advice,

trusted to the dissembled honesty of Indians, and fell into their snare; where the savage war-cry burst upon the stillness of the midnight camp, and the discipline of undaunted regulars saved the existence of an army? It was a different inference he drew from the plaudits of the military bestowed upon *him* and not upon their General. There was nothing like reproach in the tones of those voices, when the Indian howl was lost in the distance, ascribing their safety “to those brave regulars”—The thanks of a Territory for preventing the desolation of a frontier had taught him to think on one occasion, at least, he had not failed in his duty. But to his Government he submits the decision: if he was mistaken, he wishes not even the poor acknowledgment of having risqued his life for his country; of aiming, at least, at her benefit, if he should have failed in promoting it.

With much consideration,

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

JNO. P. BOYD.

Boston, January, 1816.

DOCUMENTS.

(A. 1.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
H. Q. Niagara, May 25, 1813.

Plan of Descent on Canada.

GENERAL ORDER. *Boats*

Extract.—“Here follows a detail of the ~~Troop~~, &c. &c. for the Descent.”

(A. 2.)

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
H. Q. Niagara, May 26, 1813.

AFTER ORDER—Received at 5 P. M.

THE army will embark at three o'clock to-morrow morning.—The troops will be up at one, eat their breakfast at two and be actually on board their respective boats, ready to move at half after three—Each man will take his blanket and one day's ration, ready cooked. By command,

E. BEBEE, Assist. Adj. Gen.

(A. 3.)

Camp, Four Mile Creek, 6 P. M.
Niagara, May 26, 1813.

BRIGADE ORDER.

CONFORMABLY to the General Orders of the 25th and 26th inst. [This order was received at 5 P. M. until which hour the boats had not been designated for each regiment or brigade.] The first brigade will embark in boats at 3 o'clock to-morrow morning—The several regiments will hold themselves in readiness accordingly. The boats of the brigade will form in three lines, succeeding Lt. Col. Scott's advance party. The 6th regiment formed in column of battalion right in front, will precede, the 15th and 16th regiments will successively follow in the same order—Lt. Col. M'Clure's volunteers will flank the right of the brigade and move accordingly—Four pieces of light artillery to move in the rear of the 15th regiment and four in the rear of the 16th regiment. The first four to form immediately on landing on the right of the 15th regiment, and the other four on the right of the 16th regiment.

The troops will land in order, and form immediately in order of battle. Col. Miller of the 6th, on the right—Major King of the 15th, in the centre; and Col. Pierce of the 16th, on the left—M'Clure's volunteers to flank the right.

The boat of the Brigadier General will be designated by a green bough—The commanding officers of regiments, by their regimental standards—to guard the stores and camp equipage of each regiment, a commanding officer, and a sufficient number of non-effective will be detained. The commanding officers of regiments will be responsible that their boats are in perfect readiness to receive the troops.

The troops which compose the first brigade, have already once triumphed over the foe they have now again to encounter—their country expects much from them, and will not be disappointed with their accustomed bravery; they will plant the United States' Flag in the territory of Canada.

JNO. P. BOYD,
Brigadier General Commanding 1st Brigade.

(A. 4.)

Extract of Maj. Gen. LEWIS' letter to the Secretary of War.

“OF General Boyd, I feel it a duty to do justice to his intrepid conduct at the landing of our troops on the Canada shore at Niagara. His brigade made the landing under a heavy fire of musquetry.—It was instantly formed, and he led it up the bank with great gallantry, and was the first himself to gain it.”

(A. 5.)

Gen. P. B. PORTER's letter to the PRESIDENT of the U. States.

SIR,—At the taking of Fort George, on the 27th May, 1813, I acted as volunteer Aid de Camp, to Maj. Gen. Lewis, which afforded me an opportunity, not only of knowing the place of operation, but of observing particularly, the manner in which it was executed, and it gives me pleasure to state, what I saw, and what was said, on that occasion, of the conduct of Gen. Boyd.

The landing on the enemy's shore was effected in the face of the whole British army, who opposed a spirited, but short resistance.

The American troops landed in succession, 1st. the advance on the right, under the command of Lt. Col. Scott; 2d. Boyd's brigade; 3d. Winder's, and lastly, Chandler's. The landing of Gen. Boyd's brigade, was effected (as well also that of Scott's command) under a heavy shower of musquetry, from the enemy.

who lay on the margin of the lake.—But such was the promptitude and order with which the troops were formed and led into action, that the enemy was beaten by the time Winder's brigade began to debark.

Gen. Boyd and his brigade participated largely in the well earned honors of that day, and the expedition and order with which his brigade landed and formed, and the personal gallantry which he displayed in leading them up the bank to the attack, was spoken of throughout the army in terms of the highest commendation.

With consideration and respect, I have the honor to be, your Excellency's most obt. ser. PETER B. PORTER.

(A. 6.)

Gen. MILLER's letter to a General in Boston.

DEAR SIR—To the several questions respecting the military talents of your friend, Gen. Boyd—I have the satisfaction to state, that the 4th, Gen. Boyd's regiment, when the command devolved on me at Vincennes, on the departure of Gen. Boyd for Washington, excelled in discipline and police any regiment I have ever seen in our army.

I served in his brigade at the capture of Fort George on the Niagara, Lt. Col. Scott led the advance and struck the shore first, followed immediately by our brigade which landed in succession from right to left, and formed under a most destructive fire of musquetry from the enemy, who lined the bank for some hundred yards.—The contest was principally, or *all* over, before any other brigade landed.

Gen. Boyd was the senior officer on shore. I have ever considered his conduct on that occasion brave, animating, intrepid, and *officer like*.

He was among the first to ascend the bank of the lake, and proclaimed our victory by three cheers.

My impression is that the contest continued warm for about fifteen minutes. Three musket shot hit Gen. Boyd's clothes. He used every exertion to inspire them under his command with a zeal for victory, and I considered him entitled to a prominent share of the honor of the day. If this victory had been followed up after the other brigade had landed,* as ought to have been done, it would have been one of the first and most brilliant achievements during the war.

While Gen. Boyd commanded at Fort George, after the departure of Maj. Gen. Dearborn, he was indefatigable in his attention to the discipline of the troops and police of the camp.

Very respectfully, dear sir, your ob't. serv't.

JAMES MILLER,
Brigadier General United States Army.

* After the other brigade landed, Gen. Lewis came on shore.

(A. 7.)

GEN. MILLER SPEAKING OF THE CAPTURE OF FORT GEORGE—SAYS,

“GENERAL BOYD inspired the whole by his zealous and animating conduct. He rushed up the steep bank at the head of his brigade, when after about fifteen minutes sharp fighting, the charge was given and the enemy fled.

“Gen. Boyd was senior officer in the battle and proclaimed the victory by three cheers—to him and Scott, the army acknowledged a preeminent claim to the honors achieved.

“This conquest he ever considered one of the most brilliant achievements during the war, the sortie at Fort Erie excepted.

“While Gen. Boyd commanded at Fort George, after the departure of Gen. Dearborn, he introduced and established as high a state of discipline and police, as ever existed in our army, at any period of the war.”

(A. 8.)

From a British official report of the troops stationed between Fort George and Erie, 5th May 1813, which fell into our hands at the capture of Fort George, and now in the possession of General Boyd; it appears that they numbered on *that day* (twenty-two days previous to the battle) 1925 regulars, of whom 1841 were effectives.

“THESE troops with the exception of a small garrison left at Fort Erie, were concentrated at Fort George, before the battle was fought, and were in all probability reinforced from the known intention of an attack by the American army. The militia and Indians known to have been in the battle not included.”

(B. 1.)

War Department, July 7, 1813.

SIR—General Dearborn being about to withdraw from the command of the army, until his health shall be re-established, this trust will devolve upon you, as the senior officer, *until* the arrival of some person to whom it will be *specially assigned*. During this period, you will pay the *utmost* attention to the instruction and discipline of the troops, and engage in *no* affair with the enemy, that can be *avoided*. The orders of Generals Hampton and Lewis, you will obey.

I am, Sir, with great respect, your most obedient servant,
JOHN ARMSTRONG.

Brig. Gen. JNO. P. BOYD, Fort George.

(B. 2.)

Fort George, U. Canada, July 15, 1813.

Hon. JOHN ARMSTRONG, Secretary at War.

Sir—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your commands of the 7th inst. and to inform you that Gen. Dearborn left camp this afternoon. Conformably to your orders, I have assumed the command of the army at this post.

It now becomes my duty to report to you the want of officers to this section of our army. Not long since, when our army was in high health, and elated with victory, we had two Major Generals, and three Brigadier Generals; now, our force diminished by prisoners, sickness and deaths, is left almost destitute. The enemy have been able, during *our inactivity*, to recruit his effective force, of regulars, militia and Indians.

“ I shall adhere to your instructions, which prohibit an engagement with the enemy, when avoidable, &c.”

(B. 3.)

Extract of a letter from Brigadier General Boyd, to the Secretary of War, dated

“ **FORT GEORGE**, July 22, 1813.

“ I now conceive it my duty to say, that when Gens. Dearborn and Lewis were in command, they did not think it necessary to consult a subordinate; I therefore am not in possession of any information relative to the present campaign; or instructions for my own government.”

(B. 4.)

Extract of a letter from Brigadier General Boyd, to Commodore Chauncy, dated

“ **FORT GEORGE**, July 22, 1813.

“ Allow me *once* more to remark, that the presence of the fleet, or part of it, would enable us to act against the enemy with great effect.”

(B. 5.)

Extract of a letter from Brigadier General Boyd, to the Secretary of War, dated

“ **FORT GEORGE**, July 24, 1813.

“ We are anxiously expecting the fleet, with whose co-operation the enemy's annihilation would be certain.”

(B. 6.)

Extract of a letter from Brigadier General Boyd, to the Secretary of War, dated

“ **FORT GEORGE**, July 27, 1813.

“ Our troops are becoming more healthy, and *anxious* to be moving.”

(B. 7.)

*Extract of a letter from Brig. Gen. Jno. P. Boyd, to the Hon. Sec-
retary of War, dated*

“ FORT GEORGE, August 4, 1813.

“ Since I had the honor to address you last, two deserters have come in from the enemy, by whom we learn that he is entrenching in the woods, in expectation of an attack, rather than having an intention to make one himself. His position in the woods, where his red auxiliaries are so formidable, may render him strong. But we trust, when you shall deem it proper to allow the army to act offensively, that we shall be able to dislodge, *perhaps* with the co-operation of the fleet, to capture, or drive him to his strong hold at the head of the Lake.”

(B. 8.)

*Hon. Secretary of War's letter, (after repeated application from Gen.
Boyd to allow him to act.)*

WAR DEPARTMENT, July 30, 1813.

SIR—The restrictions put upon you with regard to the enemy, were but commensurate with the enemy's command of the lake. So long as they had wings, and you had only feet, so long as they could be transported, supplied, and reinforced by water, and at will, common sense, as well as military principles, put you on the defensive. These circumstances changed, the reason of the rule changes with them ; and it now becomes your business, in concert with the fleet, to harrass and destroy the enemy, wherever you can find him. Of the competency of your force, there can be no doubt, provided your estimate of his be but tolerably correct. A general plan of campaign, formed upon existing circumstances, is under deliberation, and will be forwarded by the next mail.

I am, Sir, very respectfully, your most obedient servant,
J. ARMSTRONG.

Brig. Gen. JOHN P. BOYD, Niagara.

(B. 9.)

Head Quarters, Fort George, Aug. 8, 1813.

Hon. JOHN ARMSTRONG, Sec. of War.

SIR—By Thursday's mail, I had the honor to receive your commands of the 30th.

Conceiving myself at liberty to act offensively on the arrival of the fleet, an expedition was immediately concerted, against the enemy, and *acceded* to by Commodore Chauncey. 1000 men were to embark on board the fleet, under the command of Brigadier Gen. Williams, to land at the head of the Lake. The army at this place was to move in two columns, against the enemy's

front, while Gen. W. assailed his rear and cut off his retreat. Yesterday morning, when the troops were to have embarked, the enemy's fleet was discovered off this place. Com. Chauncey weighed anchor, approached him, and by every indication that a leeward position would afford, offered to engage. Sir James, after manœuvring some time at a distance, bore away for the head of the Lake, whither he was pursued by the Commodore. This morning our fleet is seen off in the Lake, while the enemy is near the shore, on which his army is encamped, still having the wind in his favor.

I am sorry to be obliged to report that the unusually warm weather has encreased our sick list. The officers in particular have suffered.

With much respect, I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

JNO P. BOYD, *Brig. Gen. Com.*

(B. 10.)

Extract of a letter from Gen. Boyd, to the Hon. Secretary of War.

“ Head Quarters, Fort George, Aug. 12, 1813.

“ Commodore Chauncey is still in pursuit of the enemy. This circumstance has necessarily delayed the attack on the enemy, which was contemplated in my address of the 8th inst. Gen. Porter is assembling a body of volunteers and Indians, at Buffaloe, with a view to have co-operated in this enterprise. He will probably be here soon. Any thing which can be effected, *without the fleet*, shall be attempted. *To attack the enemy, without being able to cut off his retreat, would be only to “ beat, without capturing him.”*

(B. 11.)

Extract of a letter from Gen. Boyd, to the Hon. Secretary of War.

“ Fort George, Aug. 16, 1813.

“ I had the honor to address you on the 12th inst. since which time nothing of importance has occurred. Commodore Chauncey has left this part of the Lake, and the enemy have now so far the ascendancy, as to render the proposed enterprise against the land forces, impracticable.”

(B. 12.)

Gen. Wilkinson's Letter to J. P. Boyd.

Head Quarters, Sacket's Harbor,
Aug. 23, 1813, 7 o'clock, P. M.

SIR—I have this evening received information to be relied on, that Sir George Prevost was met, on the 18th inst. about 50 miles north of York, pressing forward with an aid-de-camp, and a light

escort of cavalry, for your neighborhood. And on the 21st, a detachment of regular troops in boats, were met between Earnest-Town and Hamilton, bound up the Lake.

These movements indicate some extraordinary enterprise, and therefore I dispatch a courier, to reach you in forty hours, if possible, that you may be prepared at all points to meet the bayonet.

Were I to hazard a conjecture, I should say, he intends a stroke on Niagara, and your batteries and magazines east of the Strait. Be attentive to those points, and bear in mind, that their loss would disgrace our arms, blast your cause, and ruin the campaign. Be prepared at all quarters; spurn the thought of yielding to numbers, and your character will be exalted, on the discomfiture of a distinguished chief.*

With consideration and respect, Sir, your obedient servant,
JAMES WILKINSON.

Brig. Gen. J. P. BOYD, commanding at Fort George.

* Sir George made his attack, and was repulsed—on the 24th.

(B. 13.)

Head Quarters, Fort George, Aug. 29, 1813.

Hon. John Armstrong,

SIR—I had the honor to address you on the 24th inst. The troops had not then ceased to skirmish in the woods. In the repulse of Sir George, our loss was greater than was then reported, having five killed, and twenty-seven missing. The enemy suffered more in killed, and left in our hands one captain of the 49th regt. and six privates, prisoners. The attack was made by the enemy's whole force, with the intention, no doubt, should he fail in an attempt on our intrenchments, to draw us into the woods.—Gen. Williams, with a part of his brigade, advanced some distance into the plain, but it was conceived inexpedient to pursue the enemy into the woods, when he retired.

With much consideration and respect, I have the honor to be,
Sir, yours, &c. &c.

JNO. P. BOYD.

(B. 14.)

Head Quarters, Fort George, Sept. 9, 1813.

Hon. JOHN ARMSTRONG,

Sir—“ I have the honor to report the arrival of Major Gen. Wilkinson.”

I have the honor, &c. &c.

J. P. BOYD, *B. G. commanding.*

(B. 15.)

Extract of a letter from General Wilkinson, to the Secretary of War, dated,

“ SACKET'S HARBOR, Aug. 30, 1813.

“ SIR—I have commenced barely, the arrangement of the department of intelligence. An intelligencer left Kingston or its vicinity, last evening, to tell me that Sir George Prevost commenced his operations against Boyd, and had driven in his picquets, *and taken sixty or seventy prisoners, but had been repulsed.*”

(C. 1.)

Extract of a letter from Major Gen. Lewis, to Gen. Boyd, on the subject of the battle of Chrystler's field.

“ Your force certainly did not exceed one thousand infantry, and three hundred dragoons and artillery. The reinforcement which marched towards evening to support you, were too late for any effective aid, and my inspector informed me, consisted only of about three hundred men. The enemy was certainly driven back, and effected no object.”

(C. 2.)

Extract of a letter from Brig. Gen. Swift, (who was in the action) to an officer in Washington.

“ Hearing many remarks, as to the campaign of 1813, down the St. Lawrence, I think it proper to mention to you that relative to the affair of the 11th November, at Chrystler's field, no one doubts Gen. Boyd's having fought with his usual bravery on that day; in my opinion, a more zealous and brave officer than Gen. Boyd, never placed himself at the head of a column.”

(C. 3.)

*Head Quarters, 3d Military District,
New-York, April 29, 1813.*

To the hon. Secretary of War.

SIR—In justice to myself and the troops I had the honor to lead at the battle of Chrystler's Field, I deem it proper, even at this late hour, to report an impartial statement of that event.

The public has misapprehended my situation and made me undeservedly responsible for events that occurred under the commander in chief, and my reputation may perhaps have suffered for disasters which could not be attributable to me.

At the commencement of the campaign, whilst preparing to leave Fort George, even at Sacket's Harbor, and down to the moment of leaving Grenadier's Island, I was kept in ignorance of the pending

expedition and of the mode in which it was to be effected.— Afterwards, while descending the St. Lawrence, the frequent indisposition of the two Generals often threw the command on me, without the possession of any of those facts relative to the object of our movements or the situation and strength of the enemy, so important for the execution of my duties.

On the 9th inst. Gen. Brown, the elite corps and the dragoons (who had joined us and crossed over) moved by land on the Canada shore; the residue of the army embarked and proceeded by water; the whole rendezvoused at Chrystler's field at 2 o'clock. Late at night, without having had *any direction* of the order of landing, or any knowledge of the relative situation of the troops, a verbal order from the commander in chief suddenly informed me, that in consequence of the extreme ill health of himself and of Gen. Lewis, both being confined to their boats, the command on shore devolved on me, and that the enemy's gun boats and a body of troops by land were approaching our rear. Arrangements were immediately made for their reception.

Early next morning (10th) conformably to the commander in chief's order, Gen. Brown was detached with a strong portion of the army and directed to pursue his course down the river to dislodge some militia, *supposed* to be intercepting the route to Cornwall. It was my *decided* opinion that the army should not be detached. I did not express this to Gen. Wilkinson, for my counsel was seldom or *never* required.

The rear guard consisting of parts of the 1st, 2d and 4th brigades, a squadron of dragoons and two pieces of artillery under the command of Brig. Gen. Boyd, destined to cover the flotilla, was directed to follow as soon as the boats should put off—"should the enemy hang on the rear, advance, beat him back." *Nothing* was left to the discretion of Gen. Boyd. Gen. Wilkinson's health was such as to confine him to his cabin, and I had not seen him for several days. Yet, ambitious to be first in the service of his country, he tenaciously held the command.

The column had taken up the line of march, and proceeded about two miles, when Col. Bissell, of the 5th regiment, was *detached* from the first brigade, and *ordered* by the commander in chief to reembark and disperse a party of the enemy, *supposed* to have made a lodgment on one of the islands. Ere this could be executed, a videt from Capt. Selden from the rear, reported a column of 1500 of the enemy approaching in that direction. The detachment was immediately brought to the right about, marched up the river and formed in line of battle.

Gen. Lewis landed and came to the field, viewed our position, gave some directions and returned to his boat. I pushed forward with Capt. Selden's dragoons to reconnoitre the enemy—he opened his artillery, our line advanced, skirmished, and the enemy re-

tired. After a long, harrassing and stormy day, the troops were directed by an order from Gen. Lewis to return and take post for the night (which was inclemently stormy) so as to cover the flotilla. Late in the evening I waited on Gen. W. on board his boat, to report the events of the day, to receive orders for the night, and to *ascertain* who commanded. The general was so indisposed that I was not permitted to see him, and was directed to call on General Lewis, whose boat I boarded and received orders to defend my position and the flotilla. Early the next morning, (11th) Gen. Lewis sent an aid ordering us to move down the river. The troops were put in motion, the commander in chief arrested their march. At 10 o'clock the enemy's gun boats turned a point and commenced a cannonade on our boats, without any effect on either side. During the fore part of the day a variety of verbal orders were received, but countermanded before executed, occasioned, as I understood, by the want of information from General Brown. At 12 o'clock, impatient for some *decisive* or *discretionary* orders, the troops having been nearly 48 hours under arms, exposed to *incessant* rains, I rode to the bank of the river, requested and obtained a specific order, written by pencil, "that the flotilla would put off in 20 minutes—4 pieces of artillery would be landed to reinforce the rear guard, which would follow the boats—should the enemy harrass the rear, turn and beat him back." While expecting the signal for moving, report from the rear announced the approach of the enemy in the woods which intersected the fields and were flanking our right. Gen. Swartwout was directed to disperse them, Gen. Covington to support him. Swartwout dashed into the woods and drove the advance back to the main body.—Here he was joined by Covington. The enemy had judiciously chosen his ground among deep ravines of an extensive plain beyond the woods, and discharged a heavy and destructive fire on our advance columns. No opposition could check the invincible ardor of our troops. By resolute and repeated charges, the enemy were driven more than a mile, disputing every inch of ground.—Colonel Coles with a detachment of Boyd's brigade came up, and was immediately directed to turn the enemy's left flank, which was promptly executed amidst a shower of musketry and shrapnell shells. Two pieces of artillery under Capt. Irvine now arrived in the field, which had been delayed by a circuitous route; the four other pieces which were landed, reached the field soon after, and had their effect. The squadron of dragoons, under Major Woodford, were early in the field, but the nature of the ground did not admit of successful charges. The enemy had now been driven under the protection of their gun boats, which supported their right, and enfiladed by their numerous and heavy artillery the field in front—their left rested on the woods, obliquely to the rear, supported by light artillery, indians, and incorporated militia. Many of our troops beginning to break, and I vainly endeavored to rally

them, it became necessary for the whole to fall back, and re-form out of the range of the enemy's floating batteries, which was executed without inducing him to move from his strong position. At this time a reinforcement of 300 men under Colonel Upham, came into the field, whose activity while engaged evinced the benefit that might have been derived from their more early assistance.— After the troops were re-formed, I received orders to return to the ground near the boats, and to embark. A valuable part of the flotilla and the *two principal artillery officers* had descended the river and joined Gen. Brown at Cornwall, *during* the action, and many of the remaining boats were *already* in the stream. Had an *early* and sufficient reinforcement come into the field, as was *expected*, the result of this day would have been very different. It is evident, throughout, that the Commander in chief acted with a misapprehension of the force and the designs of the enemy—when the action began, it is probable he considered his strength inferior to ours, else he would not have retained, in inactivity, so large a force in the boats.

The strength of the enemy, according to the calculation of the principal officer engaged, could not have been less than 2500 men, 7 pieces artillery, and 9 gun boats (manned from the fleet;) the British prisoners state their strength 2100. Our force, exclusive of artillery and dragoons, amounted to not more than 1200 men. Though the result of this battle was not so decisive as I could have wished, and as the first part of it promised, yet when it is recollect, that the troops had been exposed for *four days* to incessant fatigue, and inclement storms, from which they had no *shelter*, that we carried into the field so small a force, that the action commenced unexpectedly, and without artillery, and was sustained with a cool determined valor never surpassed, for *more* than three hours, and that the enemy were superior in numbers and position, it is hoped that this affair may justly be considered as having added new glory to the American arms. The field was crimsoned with the blood of 339 killed and wounded, whose deaths or scars will *immortalize* this day. The names of the officers whose bravery and activity characterized this conflict, were reported to the commander in chief. The praise, however, which was so *parsimoniously* bestowed on this occasion, but ill accords with their *deserts*. In the account of the enemy, who reported our numbers 7000 men, a greater compliment is implied than could be found in the despatches of the commander in chief.

I would not here again give an useless exhibition of the valor and skill which was displayed by many individuals and corps on this important day. The time for reward has passed *by*—those who fell must sleep in *oblivion*, and those who survive conceal their scars, which are seen only with indifference. But, I cannot forbear from making one more struggle to rescue the character of

this army from unmerited aspersion. If it be not entitled to the praise of their country, let it not meet with *undeserved* neglect, but receive the *common* rewards of *justice*.

With much consideration and respect, I have the honor to be,
sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN P. BOYD,
B. Gen. Com'ding.

(C. 4.)

*Letter of Major Glegg, Dep. Adj. Gen. British army, to a gentleman
in Philadelphia.*

“ NEW YORK, July 25, 1815.

“ Having been stationed in Upper Canada during the late war, and holding the staff appointment of Assistant Adjutant General, I may perhaps be permitted to venture an opinion upon most of the military events of that period. I have always regretted that it was not my good fortune to have been present at the battle of Chrystler's farm, which took place on the left bank of the river St. Lawrence, in the month of November, 1813. My regret has arisen solely from the circumstance that the operations of that day were considered by the distinguished officers present, as conducted with more science and gallantry, than any that had previously taken place in Canada during the war.

“ The event was not only gratifying to the British from its successful result, (a) but it derived much additional interest from having surmounted obstacles which had not been previously encountered; I mean those arising from the good military disposition and gallantry, which were equally conspicuous on the part of the enemy. I derive my opinion from information from the principal officers engaged, whose written evidence is at present in my possession.

“ I have been greatly surprised since my arrival in this country, on hearing that the battle of Chrystler's farm, was considered (b) “ disgraceful to the name and military reputation of America.” In Canada, it is considered a well contested day, and the fortunate result attributable solely to a very decided superiority of (c) discipline and experience. No blame was ever imputed to the American commanding General.”

(a) The British were beaten back nearly two miles from where the engagement commenced, and did not follow the Americans when they returned to their boats, after the battle, and embarked.

(b) By some officers not in the battle.

(c) Superiority of numbers, position and artillery.

☞ *The following Document should have been placed among the documents marked A. after No. 3.*

FIRST BRIGADE, H. Q.—Newark, May 28, 1813.

BRIGADE ORDERS.

The General commanding the first brigade feels a peculiar satisfaction in congratulating the troops on their glorious achievement of yesterday. Their conduct was such as entitles them to the thanks of their commander, and the gratitude of their country.

Col. Miller of the 6th regiment, deserves great applause for steadiness in action, the rapidity with which he supported the advance under the gallant Scott—The 15th under Maj. King, impatient to share the honors of the day, immediately succeeded and formed under a most galling fire—The 16th under Col. Pearce urged their boats to the shore and bore an honorable participation in the contest.—The light artillery under Col. Porter, merits the highest credit in bringing them out upon the steep bank, &c.—Much was expected from Col. McClure's volunteers, and the General has not been disappointed. It will be his duty as well as inclination to make their claims known to the Commander in Chief—as all the troops composing the brigade behaved so well it would be a difficult task to discriminate those who were preeminent, but the General cannot suppress his admiration of the fortitude of Maj. King, who continued to lead his regiment through the severity of the contest, long after having received a painful and debilitating wound,—the exertions of the officers and men who ascended the bank and formed amidst such a destructive fire, excited his admiration and astonished the enemy: and will convince their countrymen as well as foes, that their valor will overcome every resistance. The General will find great satisfaction in obeying the order of the Commander in Chief, which required him to make a “report of conspicuous merit, whether found in the commanding officers or in the ranks,” and they may be assured that their distinguished actions shall not pass without proper encomiums—although the General has not particularised individual merit he may perhaps be excused in recording the intrepid conduct of his Aid de Camp Lt. Whiting and brigade Maj. Capt. Grafton, they have justified his expectations and are entitled to his applause.

If there is any honor to your Brigadier General, it is his having had command of such a valiant band.

JNO. P. BOYD,

Brigadier General Commanding 1st Brigade.



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